

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 2466

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, EC, MX
SUBJECT: VISIT OF MEXICAN FOREIGN MINISTER TO ECUADOR

1. MEXICAN FOREIGN MINISTER SANTIAGO ROEL DEPARTED ECUADOR ON APRIL 11 AFTER A TWO-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT. WHILE IN QUITO HE RECEIVED USUAL PROTOCOLARY HONORS, INCLUDING AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT. DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ROEL AND HIS ECUADOREAN COUNTERPART, JOSE AYALA, RESULTED IN A JOINT DECLARATION WHICH TOUCHED ON A WIDE RANGE OF BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL CONCERNS WITHOUT NOTING ANY SUBSTANTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS. THE DECLARATION CONSISTED PRIMARILY OF STATEMENTS REAFFIRMING THE TWO COUNTRIES' "COMMON" INTEREST ON ISSUES SUCH AS THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER, THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO, LAW OF THE SEA, AND AN EASTERN PACIFIC TUNA CONVENTION. MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE MINISTERS AGREED (A) TO BEGIN WORK ON AN AGREEMENT FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE STATE OIL CORPORATIONS OF ECUADOR (CEPE) AND MEXICO (PEMEX) AND (B) TO FOSTER ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE HEMISPHERE BY CREATING AN ANDEAN PACT/ MEXICAN MIXED COMMISSION AND BY COORDINATING MORE CLOSELY THE ACTIVITIES OF SELA AND LAFTA.

2. A FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE CONFIRMED TO POLCOUNS THAT
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ROEL'S VISIT PRODUCED NO SPECIFIC RESULTS AND THAT THE INITIATIVES BROACHED WILL NOT TAKE FORM UNTIL AYALA MAKES A RETURN VISIT TO MEXICO. NO DATE HAS BEEN SET YET FOR THIS TRIP. ACCORDING TO THE SAME SOURCE, PREPARATION OF THE DECLARATION WAS DELAYED BY THE MEXICAN DELEGATION, WHICH HAD TO CLEAR EACH ITEM OF THE DRAFT WITH ROEL BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH THE AGENDA. HE SUPPOSEDLY MADE NUMEROUS

NON-SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES IN THE LANGUAGE. THE FINAL DECLARATION CONTAINS A REFERENCE TO THE GEOSYNCHRONOUS ORBIT SUBSCRIBED TO ONLY BY AYALA, SINCE THE MEXICANS WERE REPORTEDLY NOT PREPARED TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE. ECUADOR WILL TRY TO ARRANGE JOINT STATEMENTS ON THE GEOSYNCHRONOUS ORBIT IN FUTURE COMMUNIQUE OF THIS TYPE.

3. COMMENT: DESPITE ITS SUBSTANTIVE THINNESS, ROEL'S VISIT DID PROVIDE THE ECUADOREANS (THROUGH ORAL REMARKS) WITH AN INDICATION THAT MEXICO WOULD ATTEMPT TO ALLEVIATE THE SEVERE TRADE IMBALANCE THAT EXISTS IN ITS FAVOR. (FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY-JUNE 1977, FOR EXAMPLE, MEXICO EXPORTED \$9 MILLION WORTH OF GOODS TO ECUADOR AND IMPORTED ONLY \$619,000.) THE PROMISE OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN CEPE AND PEMEX WAS PERHAPS A RESPONSE TO ECUADOREAN CONCERN ABOUT COMPETITION FOR MARKETS IN THE CARIBBEAN, GIVEN ECUADOR'S LOSS OF THE US PACIFIC COAST MARKET AND MEXICO'S ADVENT AS AN OIL EXPORTER. NOTABLY ABSENT FROM THE DECLARATION WERE REFERENCES TO THE PANAMA CANAL AND TO ECUADOR'S EXCLUSION FROM THE GENERAL SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES UNDER THE US TRADE ACT, WHICH WE INTERPRET AS STEMMING FROM THE DESIRE OF ONE OR BOTH PARTIES TO STAY AWAY FROM CONTENTIOUS ISSUES INVOLVING THE US IF THEY CAN.
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